



Confined Spaces Require Evaluation and Training

Confined spaces are not limited to typically dangerous workplaces like farms and industrial settings. Any workplace could contain a confined space, even a hospital, school, or office. Employers must find out if their workplaces have confined spaces and take proper safety precautions.

Confined spaces have configurations that make it hard to work in them. Workers may become trapped by the size or shape of the space. Plus, atmospheric conditions may expose workers to hazardous substances. Confinement, limited access, and restricted airflow can cause hazards not usually found in an open area.

The term “permit-required confined space” (or “permit space”) refers to a confined space that contains health or safety hazards. Permit spaces require permits for entry.

A **confined space** is an area:

- With limited or restricted means of entry or exit,
- Large enough for a person to enter and do work, and
- Not designed for continuous worker occupancy.

Examples of confined spaces include, but are not limited to, underground vaults, tanks, storage bins, pits, vessels and silos.

A **permit-required confined space** is a confined space that also has one or more of these characteristics:

- Contains or has the potential to contain a hazardous atmosphere, **or**
- Contains materials that could engulf an entrant, **or**
- Has inwardly converging walls or a floor that slopes downward and tapers to a smaller, cross section, which could cause a person to be trapped or asphyxiated, **or**
- Contains any other recognized serious safety or health hazard.

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Following is a brief overview of the OSHA requirements for permit-required confined spaces in general industry (29 CFR 1910.146). Please note: Construction standards for confined space (29 CFR 1926.21) are different. The OSHA web page (www.osha.gov) contains the full text of the standards.

Evaluation: General industry employers must evaluate the workplace to determine if permit spaces are present. A “Permit-Required Confined Space Decision Flow Chart” (available from SafetyWorks!) can help with the evaluation.

The employer must use danger signs or other means to inform exposed employees about any permit spaces.

The employer must identify any hazards in the space. Since deaths in confined spaces often occur because the atmosphere is oxygen deficient or toxic, confined spaces must be tested prior to entry and continually monitored. Testing must be conducted in the following sequence: for oxygen, for combustible gases or vapors, and for toxic gases or vapors.

Written program: If employees are not to enter permit spaces, employers must prevent entry. Employers who allow worker entry into permit spaces must develop and implement a written program. The OSHA standard specifies what the program must include.

Permits: A permit must be made available to workers before they enter a permit space. The permit, signed by the entry supervisor, must verify that pre-entry preparations have been completed and that the space is safe to enter. The OSHA standard specifies what the entry permit must include.

Training: Before permit space work begins, the employer must train workers who work in permit spaces (authorized entrants). Rescue team members must also receive training, including training on CPR and first aid. In addition, employers must train attendants and entry supervisors on their duties.

Emergency procedures: More than 60% of confined space fatalities occur among would-be rescuers; therefore, confined space procedures must protect rescuers as well as entrants. In addition to first aid and CPR training, rescue personnel must receive entrant training, training in the use of personal protective equipment, and rescue training. They must practice rescue exercises at least yearly.

At least one attendant must be stationed outside the permit space when a worker is inside.

Authorized entrants must wear a chest or full body harness with a retrieval line. The retrieval line must be attached to a mechanical device or fixed point outside the permit space.

SafetyWorks! staff can help employers develop and implement their permit-required confined space programs.

Share Your Safety Success



Have you improved safety at your workplace? Would you like to tell other businesses about your success? Maybe your stretching program has reduced injuries. Or, maybe you put lights in the parking lot so workers won't fall. Perhaps you changed your safety training program. Whatever you did that made your workplace safer, big or small, we want to know about it.

We want to know what the problem was, what you did about it, and what happened as a result. We'd like to include your stories in the SafetyWorks! newsletters and invite some of you to speak at next year's conference "Using Research to Improve Workplace Safety and Health."

**To share your success,
or for more information,
contact Kim Lim at 624-6443.
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Visit our web site at <http://www.state.me.us/labor/blsmain.htm>



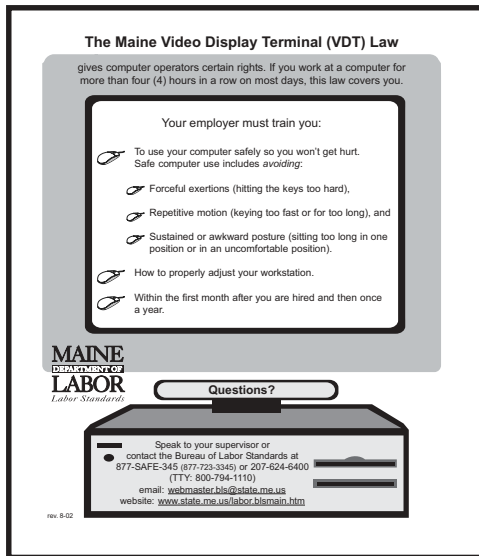
Quarries can be deadly

Eleven people around the country drowned in quarries this July and August, according to the Mine Safety Health Administration (MSHA). Most of the victims, who ranged in age from 16 to 30, were swimming in quarry ponds that were marked off limits.

While none of this year's quarry fatalities occurred in Maine, the state is dotted with quarries that are used for swimming. Old, flooded quarries can have icy temperatures, deceptive depths, and dangerous, undetected mining equipment below the water's surface. Abandoned, they no longer pose a danger to workers, but they can be deadly to people who choose to play in them.

MSHA's public awareness campaign, "Stay Out—Stay Alive," educates children and adults about the dangers of swimming in old quarries and playing on mine property. For more information go to www.msha.gov.

Maine employers must display a Video Display Terminal (VDT) poster where employees can see it. The Maine Department of Labor has a new attractive, easy to read poster available at no cost. For a copy call 624-6400 (TTY: 800-794-1110) or go to www.state.me.us/labor/bls/vdtposter.pdf



Employers do not have to replace the previous version of the poster with the new one.

Newsletter articles are written by individual authors and are not necessarily products of the Maine Department of Labor or its staff. Information in the articles is not a substitute for official policy or regulations. The editor is Lynne Lamstein, director of outreach and education for the Bureau of Labor Standards. Tel: 207-624-6400, TTY (for people who are deaf and hard of hearing): 800-794-1110, e-mail: webmaster.blb@state.me.us

The Maine Department of Labor provides equal opportunity employment and programs. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

Grant to Help Small Businesses

The Maine Department of Labor recently received a \$110,000 grant from OSHA to help small businesses improve workplace safety and health. The grant will fund a yearlong project to assess the occupational safety and health needs of small businesses and work with small business owners and associations to address those needs.

Teaching Teachers to Teach Safety

Thirty-six Maine educators participated in the Summer Safety Institute for Educators and the advanced Train-the-Trainer class held at the University of Southern Maine June 24-28, 2002. Presented jointly by USM and SafetyWorks!, both classes provide information and resources to help educators teach youth about workplace safety and health. The Summer Safety Institute is in its eighth year.



Photo credit: Sarah Blake

Teachers Kevin Quist and Buddy Clark watch while Fred Schmidt demonstrates how to use a step ladder — safely.

Visit our web site at <http://www.state.me.us/labor/blsmain.htm>

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Those of us concerned with workplace safety go about our daily business of training, inspecting, enforcing, and supporting legislation to protect workers. Sometimes we forget the importance of our work—that it can make the difference between health and illness, life and death. We just do what needs to be done.

But we can't be everywhere, and we often can't stop the string of events that can cause something to go terribly wrong and someone to get badly hurt.

This summer too many workers died or were seriously injured in our workplaces. Different choices could have prevented most of these tragedies.

I ask every one of you to become someone who is concerned with workplace safety—to become the eyes and ears that detect problems and the voices that speak them out. If you help us extend our reach and speak out about dangers, maybe together we can make sure we all go home after work.



Michael V. Frett, Director
Bureau of Labor Standards